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Pulpit Preaching

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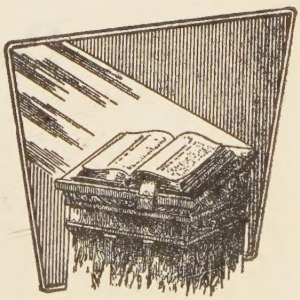

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

For thirty-seven years **The Ministers Manual**, edited by Dr. M. K. W. Heicher, has been an indispensable homiletic sourcebook for an ever-growing number of pastors. Breadth of emphases, up-to-date materials, quality of content, and relevance to basic preaching needs have keep this series not only the outstanding in its field but also the only one to sustain continuous year by year publication. The 1962 edition features suggestive materials for every speaking and class need in the church program. (Harper & Brothers, 333 pp., $3.50)

One Great Ground of Hope by Henry P. Van Dusen concerns Christian missions and Christian unity and contains historical perspectives for an appreciation of the many forces which are nowadays giving meaning to our Lord's prayer that his people be one. A heartening and inspiring book which should receive the thoughtful consideration of church leaders, mission study groups, and laymen, the pages survey the past in order that we may look forward with hope. (Westminster Press, 205 pp., $3.95)

Four more volumes have been added to the noteworthy **Layman's Bible Commentary.** These are: Volume 6 (Judges, Ruth, and I and II Samuel), Volume 16 (Matthew), Volume 13 (Ezekiel and Daniel), and Volume 21 (Romans and I and II Corinthians). Previous comments on the LBC series have pointed to the substantial and authorative editing and the values to both pastors and laymen of the expositions and discussions. This reader wishes again to

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WORTH QUOTING

E. Paul Hovey

The Bible is still a dangerous book. At least that is the impression for . . . any book that speaks to men and women about their attitudes toward minority groups, or about their philosophy of property and possessions, or about human rights, is potentially a dangerous book.

—Paul E. Strauch

* * *

The Bible is a relevant book. Pity the man who goes to the Bible to escape the realities and unpleasantries of his day! He will run head on into one of the most important facts about the Bible: it speaks to us as pointedly and helpfully about our time as it did in the past to previous generations of men.

—Paul E. Strauch

* * *

We need a marriage of two elements, that the material and mechanical advances should serve, not enslave man's mind and spirit in a wallow of mediocrity and time-saving, but rather free mind and spirit and foster their growth and enrichment.

—Louis Bromfield

* * *

Half our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we

(Continued on Page 27)

Next month's themes will be "The Real Reason for Celebrating Christmas" and "Turning Corners," sermons for Christmas Sunday and New Year Sunday.

Pulpit Preaching

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NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD

INGRATITUDE

William McLeister, II, Beverly Heights United Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Penn.
Scripture: Luke 17:1-19

On the border between Samaria and Galilee as Jesus made a journey southward to Jerusalem, He encountered a small colony of lepers. In the time of Jesus it was rather a common sight to meet along the roadside these poor souls who were plagued with what we would now call Hansen's disease. Their extremities were decomposed; often their faces were eaten away with this grey death. We of the Western world are not at home seeing such sights. However, the compassion of Jesus shines through in this account recorded by Luke.

I

The first scene is a formula of faith. As Jesus approached this little group, Luke tells us that they cried out to Jesus, calling Him Lord and Master, and beseeching Him to have mercy upon them.

One of the symptoms of leprosy is that the voice becomes merely a hoarse whisper. It must have taken a tremendous exertion of physical strength on the part of these lepers to cry out in a loud enough voice to be heard by Jesus. They had to cry out because, according to the Levitical law under which they had to operate as tainted people, they had to keep themselves from all untainted people by a prescribed distance. We read this in the thirteenth chapter of Leviticus: "The leper who has the disease shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head hang loose, and he shall cover his upper lip and cry, 'Unclean, unclean.' He shall remain unclean, as long as he has the disease. He is unclean. He shall dwell alone in a habitation outside the camp."

We do not know how these ten lepers got together. They may have been a colony which dwelt together, or they may have assembled themselves hoping that their aggregate misery might reach the heart of this one whom they knew merely as a healer. Whatever it was, when Jesus came, the ten, in unison, cried out, "Have mercy upon us."

The very fact that they called to Jesus indicated that there was a germ of faith present in their minds and hearts. Somehow they had heard about this man. Somehow they believed that He was able to conquer physical disease, and so now as they have an opportunity to test His healing powers, they call to Him. Their choice of words also indicates the germ of faith which was present in their hearts because they call Him "Master" and "Lord." "Jesus, Master," they cried, "have mercy on us." The term "Master" indicates that here was one who had unusual power.

Apparently Jesus went over rather close to them, within touching distance, because Luke says it was when He saw them and not when He heard them, that He responded.

The heart of Jesus always responded to human needs; it always went out even as water seeks its own level. So the compassion and the mercy of Jesus always went out from Him to those in need. As Jesus looked upon these poor creatures, He realized that here were people in need. He didn't stop to ask their nationality, or their

religious affiliation, or any other facts concerning the way in which we would classify people. The only classification into which they fell was one of desperate need. Jesus was ready at all times to minister, even as He is today, to all in need, if those in need have faith.

Jesus did not touch these men apparently; He did not follow His usual formula for healing. But listen to what Luke says, 'And when Jesus saw them, He said unto them, 'Go shew yourselves unto the priests.'" This seems like a strange prescription and yet Jesus was testing their faith, and at the same time Jesus was following the prescription of the Hebrew law. It is also prescribed in the Levitical code that any leper who was cured of his leprosy must go to the priest in the temple and there secure a certificate of cleansing. Only after he had that certificate was he able to return to his family and townspeople.

Jesus says to these lepers, "Go to the priest in the temple," and the implication is, "and get your certificate of healing." Would it not seem a strange thing for lepers to make their way into the temple where they were forbidden because of their unclean condition? Yet there must have been something in the way Jesus said it, in the way He looked at them, that Luke says that they went. Jesus was prescribing for their faith. He was saying in effect, "If you have the faith to believe that, as you go to the temple, my power will reach out and cure you and you will receive your certificate of cleansing, then go by faith." All ten of them responded to this formula for faith. Luke says, "As they went, they were cleansed."

II

Luke paints for us a second scene, which we call an attitude of gratitude. Listen again: "And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks, and he was a Samaritan." He was a foreigner; he was an alien; he was one of that half-breed group which descended from the mixture of foreigners whom the Assyrians brought in after the captivity of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and intermarried with the Jewish stock. To the Jews, the Samaritans were outcasts, foreigners, aliens. Yet Jesus says it was the who came back and expressed his gratitude for the healing. We do not know the mixture of Jews and Samaritans in this leper colony, but if I were to guess I would say there were nine Jews and one Samaritan. It was the one foreigner who came back to thank the Healer who had affected the miracle.

Listen again: "And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?" But where are the nine? These words go down as a perpetual memorial to the sin of ingratitude, the sin of clutching one's blessing and running away, and never remembering to go back and thank the one who made the blessing possible.

I imagine those other nine lepers intended to give thanks, but they never got around to it. Perhaps they rationalized by saying: "Well, did not the Healer tell us to go to the temple, to the priest? If we went back to Him, we would be disobeying what He bade us do." But this would be merely rationalizing because the truly grateful heart can only express itself by giving thanks for its gratitude.

The sin of ingratitude is all too common in the church today. Look into your own hearts as I search mine. When did you last thank your wife for taking care of the children and running the home so smoothly? When did you last express your gratitude to your parents for raising you in a Christian home and giving of their time and energy to make possible the things they consider best for your welfare? When did you last thank your teachers for the sacrificial job which they are doing in bringing you through the rigors of the discipline of educa-

tion? When did you last thank your husband for his faithfulness on the job and his desire to go ahead in order to better your lot and that of your children? And so we could go down through the list and each one of us, if he were honest with himself, would have to confess that he is guilty to some extent of the sin of ingratitude. When did you last thank God for the unspeakable gift of His Son, Jesus Christ? When did you last thank God for the church which nurtured you from the time you were held at the baptismal fount until you walked into this sanctuary and watched your bride come down the aisle on the arm of her father? The church which visits you in the hospital and ministers to you in time of sorrow—when did you last thank God for the church? When did you last thank the Lord for the freedom which is yours as a member of a democracy?

One writer recently described what would happen if the stars in the sky would somehow be blotted out for one hundred years, and then one night suddenly the darkness would break and once again Orion, Pleiades, the North Star, and the rest could be seen. This writer says there would be a great elation which would sweep over the world because mankind could again see the stars, and there would be true gratitude for the starlight.

We take so many things for granted: the stars, the sun, the moon, the food which we eat, the water which we drink, the solid earth upon which we walk, and a host of other things. We take them for granted, and we commit the sin of ingratitude.

Jesus expected the other nine to come back and at least give Him thanks, and Jesus expects us to be grateful for our blessings. But how can gratitude grow? It grows like the seeds in the earth. The seed of gratitude is in every one of us, but it takes the sun and the rain to cause it to sprout and bring forth fruit. It is just as instinctive for a man to praise as it is for a bird to sing. The very word "praise" comes from the root meaning "to shout for joy." "Hallelujah" can almost be translated "Hurrah for Jehovah," and yet how reluctant we are as His children to praise Him.

III

"Where are the nine?" said Jesus, asking for a reason for the absence of the nine lepers who were just as completely healed as the one grateful leper. "Where are the nine? Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"

I imagine the nine put off their praise; they simply postponed it to another day, which is human nature, is it not? They probably said, "Well, some day Jesus will come through our village and we'll go up and shake His hand with a clean hand and say 'Thank you, Lord, for cleansing this leprous hand.'" But Jesus never came to their village and their praise, as far as we know, was never given. They go down into history as a symbol of ingratitude—nine men who failed to thank God for His blessing. But is this so uncommon?

Some times as pastors we visit in the homes of those who are unconcerned about Christ and the church. Very often these people will say: "Well, Reverend, some day I'm going to surprise you and show up in your church on Sunday morning. In fact, I'm thinking about starting the regular habit of attending church again." We usually say to such people, "Grand, I'll see you next Sunday in church." And you can see the face fall because it is not a sincere promise. In fact, very often they are honest enough to say, "Well, maybe not next Sunday, but one of these days you'll see me there." But for the most part, like the nine lepers, they never show up. I don't think they are insincere entirely; they simply put it off. They postpone their gratitude to God. They know they should and they admit it, but they allow the other things of life to crowd in upon them.

Jesus said: "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"

And Jesus, I believe, is still saying that today. As the Gospel is preached and as people respond with dedicated lives, Jesus is thrilled, He is happy, and as you come and fall at His feet and thank Him for taking your place on the cross and dying for your sins, He says: "Your faith has made you whole, complete, but where are the nine? Where are the others who should be here at my feet?" Those are the words of Jesus, I believe, that are spoken today. He gave His life for the world; but unless man is willing to come to Christ's feet and fall on his fact and say, "Thank you for making me whole," he will miss the Kingdom of God.

These nine lepers never had the privilege of hearing Jesus say to them: "Arise, thy faith hath made thee complete." I believe that grateful leper was not only cleansed from Hansen's disease, but I believe he was cleansed from the disease of sin. His heart was cleansed, as well as his body, and the nine missed the opportunity of a lifetime, of eternity because of the sin of ingratitude. "Were there not ten cleansed?" said Jesus. "But where are the nine?"

GOOD TRUSTEES OF OUR GRATITUDE

Gene E. Bartlett, Colgate Rochester Divinity School, Rochester, New York

It is said that an earnest man, taking seriously the popular idea that he always should think positively, found himself put to the test one evening in his prayer. It had been one of those days. Any lesser man would have given in to complain on the spot. But after some searching, he came up with a positive prayer of one sentence, "O Lord, I thank Thee that not every day is as bad as this."

The instinct to be thankful is a sound one. If you are looking for a single test of our spiritual health, you probably will find it here. Thankfulness is the mark of a healthy mind and trusting heart. It's the most fruitful relation to God. The more we know of God, the more thankful we become. The more thankful we become, the more we know of God.

It is only natural then that the Bible should sound the note of thankfulness again and again. It tells how men found the grounds for gratitude even in the most difficult circumstances of life. It is to one of these expressions that we turn for our thought on this Thanksgiving Sunday. Scholars tell us that most Psalms were written for use on specific occasions. They cover the full round of human experience so that a man could find the Psalm to fit the mood of the moment or the need of the day. The 116th Psalm is one which was written for such a specific time. After recovery from illness, when the worshiper had returned to the congregation, this Psalm was to be his expression of thankfulness. So, the Psalmist recalls how he had called upon God and God had heard his prayer. He confesses that his life was in danger, and God in His grace had saved him. Then counting his blessings, he comes to a question which is inevitable in an hour of thanksgiving. For the Psalmist cries, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"

That's the real question in any thanksgiving. I am well in the bounds of experience when I say that the moment you ask that question is one of the most important in your life. It is an important hour because it leads to some of life's greatest experiences. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"

I

First of all, it is an hour of real awakening. We see something fully which we had seen only partially. "All his benefits toward me," said the Psalmist. Undoubtedly, he had seen some of them before. It wasn't that

he had never known moments of thankfulness or passing times of gratitude. But somehow in this hour all these benefits joined together to bring him a new sense of God's presence.

By the very nature of human experience we may know that some of you come to this Thanksgiving having known this kind of awakening in your life during the year past. One of the most common and most important expressions a pastor hears is the gratitude of a person who has passed through crisis and had his eyes opened by it. An illness is past, or a separation is ended, or a crisis has been resolved by decision. How often a minister sees in the aftermath of that a new note of thankfulness in the lives of those who have passed through. "How thankful I am!" says someone. "How much I have taken for granted. God help me to be more grateful." The benefits had been there all the time, but the experience was an hour of awakening. These benefits are now known and cherished.

That awakening comes in many ways. For Brother Lawrence, the saint of the kitchen who practiced the presence of God, it began one day when he looked out the window and saw a branch which had been dead for weeks coming to life with the approach of spring. It reminded him of God's power to bring new life. For Dr. Barnardo of England it came when a red-headed boy knocked at his door having heard that he took in boys from the street. And when Dr. Barnardo had to tell the lad there was no place for him, his conscience and compassion were like a fire within him. He saw how many benefits he had and knew he must use them for boys.

You see, once the moment of awakening has come, you have crossed a great divide. You are like a man who sees after he has been blind. You have discovered springs in the desert. Life has entered into a whole new phase.

II

But let us look again at the Psalmist's word. In them we are reminded of a second truth. These words reflect not only an hour of real awakening, but in the second place, an hour of sincere offering. "What shall I render unto the Lord?" asks the grateful man. Giving in gratitude is one of the deepest and enduring motives in any life. It isn't just the act of giving which makes for spiritual growth. There are many ways in which we give. There is duty-giving, as all of us know. Then there is an investment-giving in which we give a little in the hope of receiving much more later. But this kind which is in the word of the Psalmist is thanks-giving. It is born of gratitude. You give because you must. Your heart is overflowing.

But how do you render anything unto God? How can you give to Him who already has all? How can we give to God whom we have not seen? Here the Bible has a constant and clear answer. Whenever we want to render something to God in return, it is as though He says to us, Pass it on to others of my children. Jesus reflected it exactly once when three times he asked Peter, "Do you love me?" And when the answer was Yes, Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." It is passing along the blessing which is our way of rendering unto God our thanksgiving.

David Livingstone once expressed his thankfulness to one of his teachers in the University of Glasgow, David Hogg. In response to the question as to what he could do in return, the teacher said, "Now, lad, make religion the everyday business in your life and not a thing of fits and starts."

TRIUMPHANT THANKSGIVING

Aaron N. Meckel, First Congregational Church, St. Petersburg, Florida

Wherever I go, thank God, he makes my life a constant pageant of triumph in Christ.
II Corinthians 2:14 (Moffatt)

"Thanks be unto God who always causeth us to triumph in Christ!" Tune your life to that thrilling major key and yours too will be a triumphant Thanksgiving. There's something of the unfurling of banners and the blowing of trumpets in it. This great Christian faced the worst and came out believing in the best. He has seen the Roman conquerors on parade and he siezes on the figure as alone adequate to convey the gratitude that throbs in his soul. Thanks be to God who "makes of my life a constant pageant of triumph!"

Nor is there any smug Pharisaism in these words: "Thank God that I am spared what other people must go through!" Indeed not! That were not Christian Thanksgiving! What we see instead is a Great-Heart praising the Christ who stands by him in the thickest of the fight. Here is the soul engaged in its highest function — the praise of the living God.

In this year of our Lord let us get our bearings anew, steer by the compass of the Eternal Goodness, and fling ourselves with new energy into life.

I

Let us thank God for great causes worth doing battle for! To be sure, I'm not praising God for the advent of this present world unrest. But I do most certainly thank Him that in the midst of all the sorrow and destruction that engulf humanity one can discern something far dearer than personal safety and even life itself. Thus a British soldier left his mother these courageous words: "I have no regrets; I consider myself fortunate to be called into the service of my country in so crucial a time and for a cause so precious to the human heart." I'm hinting that the human spirit has grown flabby, selfish, and tepid; that in this high hour of destiny, organized cruelty and injustice are stabbing it wide awake. We are discovering, now, that the vision of God's reign and kingdom still fascinates and grips the heart and that all that is contrary to it — ruthless oppression of minorities, concentration camps, needless poverty in the midst of plenty, rancor and hatred between class and race — all these must go! They're not in God's blueprint. Never mind the suffering and self-sacrifice involved. Men don't mind that so much. But they do insist on something worth sacrificing for.

Recently I compared notes with an eminent psychiatrist. I told him that I conceived the task of the religion of Christ to be of getting people to face the realities of life squarely. "Exactly," said he, "and once that is done the battle is already half won." Then organize your life around something worth while. Fling it out in behalf of the commonweal. Help lift the load of relief for the needy by your generosity. Go stand under the Cross, and God shall make of your life a "constant pageant of triumph in Christ."

II

Let us dare to thank God for suffering and hardship that elicit the tough moral fiber of the hero-soul! Here is a page from the New Testament biography of the author of our text: "In buffettings and scourgings often, by perils on land and sea, left lying on the ground for dead after stoning, let down by supposed friends and attacked by enemies." And out of all that came what? A man who could say, "Wherever I go I thank God that He makes my life a perpetual pageant of victory!" A surgeon said to a veteran who had lost a leg in the service of his nation, "I'm sorry

you had to lose that leg." The reply: "I didn't lose it. I gave it!"

The spirit of heroism is written with red ink into Mrs. Heman's hymn on the "Landing of the Pilgrims":

Amidst the storm they sang, And
the stars heard and the sea;
And the sounding isles of the dim
woods rang with their anthem
of the free.
Aye! call it holy ground, the place
where first they trod,
They left unstained what here
they found, the freedom to
worship God!

We are told that iron must be heated to incandescence in the forge before it can be hammered into shape for use. Yet, let no one speak lightly of suffering. I would it might be spared the innocent victims of war. We shall not attempt an explanation of the baffling mystery of it. But we do testify that suffering often produces heroism of the highest kind.

What a purgatorial fire this thing we call experience! If you would plumb the true depths of the human spirit, then hurl some vast burden or sorrow at it. Ease degenerates. Trials sharpen the cutting edge of our personalities. John Henry Jowett liked to tell of the elderly deacon of his church who developed a cancer of the throat. At the last when he could no longer even whisper, he wrote the thanksgiving of his heart on a piece of paper and handed it to his pastor: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, for the Lord is good, and His kindness endureth forever!" Thank God for suffering and hardship that prove the mettle of our souls and make of our lives a "constant pageant of triumph."

III

Most of all do I thank God for a Faith which sets a despised Cross as an emblem of triumph in the midst of the world's pain and lostness and for that One who in His own life overcame all odds, and bids us His followers be of good courage. I praise God for the interpretative power of Christ's Cross.

You and I live in one of those Pilgrim eras in which the forces of evil are grimly intermeshed with good. Once again men are being hounded for the faith of their fathers. Anti-Christ in a thousand forms is stalking abroad. Again the Mayflower sails the seas in search of friendly shores for persecuted minorities. The whole creation travails and groans together in pain awaiting the manifestation of of the son of God. We here in America may have much to go through in years to come. Then let us thank God that the Pilgrim spirit still lives and that we may become its willing instruments in this world. For a faith which assures us that, although truth seems forever on the scaffold, and wrong forever on the throne, yet,

That Scaffold sways the future,
and behind the dim unknown
standeth God
Within the shadow, keeping watch
above his own.

Let us thank God for the perspective which causes a great historian like Froude to say, "Two lessons, history teaches: that in the long run of the years it goes well with the good and ill with the bad."

I thank God for the living exemplars of the transfiguring power of the Cross all about us. A young physician, a professing Christian, said that his religion seemed always strained at one point. It concerned those quiet, uncomplaining folk who are sent away from the hospital as those for whom nothing could be done. Could the faith stand up to that? And then he discovered that there is such a thing as the creative acceptance of suffering. And here is where they learned it: "Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the Cross despising the shame."

Thanks be to God who makes of my life a constant pageant of triumph! Triumphant Thanksgiving!

THE DEEPER MEANING OF THANKSGIVING

T. Cecil Myers, Grace Methodist Church, Atlanta, Georgia

Gratitude is one of life's highest graces. Ingratitude marks a man as one of life's meanest. When Paul listed the cardinal sins in II Timothy 3:2, he included unthankfulness as one of them. Jesus had an experience one day that illustrates the tragedy of ingratitude. He met ten lepers. They all wanted to be healed. They asked to be healed. Jesus healed them. They went on their way, but of the ten, only one came back to show his gratitude for such a great blessing. As the season of thanksgiving comes, we examine our hearts, primarily to see how grateful we are for what God has done for us. See what we have: food, clothes, homes, a church, a Saviour, friends, a job to do, a great country, health, and many other things. We take these things for granted very often. Two men, Smith and Jones, met at the railway station. Smith snubbed Jones. "Say, Smith," said Jones, "don't you recognize me?" "Yes," was the reply. "Aren't you going to say hello?" "Hello," replied Smith. "Aren't you a bit ungrateful?" asked Jones. "When you were sick two years ago, who paid your doctor bills?" "You did," replied Smith. "And this summer when you got a cramp, who saved you from drowning?" asked Jones. "You did," said Smith. "Then how can you pass me without speaking?" asked Jones. "I know," said Smith, "but what have you done for me in the last three months?" This is the season when we examine our hearts to see if ingratitude has crept in.

But we mistake the real meaning of thanksgiving. We get so busy asking, "What have I to be thankful for," that we forget thanksgiving is not an audit, or an inventory, but a fundamental attitude toward life. Is my very nature thankful? Am I thankful in good times, as well as in bad? God always provides, no matter what the circumstances, and if we only enumerate our blessings in fair days, we have mistaken the basic meaning of thanksgiving. When our hearts are truly thankful, we don't say, "O God, I thank thee for this and that." Rather we say, "O God, I thank thee for thyself!" This attitude can be illustrated by an incident on one of our airlines some time ago. A west bound plane, flying over the Atlantic from Europe to the United States, made what seemed to be a routine landing on an island. Due to miscalculations on the part of the pilot, or some fault in the plane itself, the plane made a dangerous landing near the brink of a sheer cliff. The passengers were in panic. Tragedy was avoided, and the ship rolled to a stop just short of the edge of the cliff. The panic over, the passengers poured from the ship. What did they do? They rushed to a bar to celebrate! Has something happened to the human heart to take away this fundamental attitude toward life?

I

I would like my message to point up the highest gift of all for which we ought to be thankful: God. This is fundamental. If we have the right attitude toward God and are in right relationship with him, we'll develop the grace of gratitude for everything else. So let me tell you why I am thankful for our God.

He is a living God! Why call him this? He does not have biological life, such as I have in this physical body. But when I say "living," I mean that he is a living spirit, just as the essential part of me is not physical but spirit. He is one who is personal, who wills, who thinks, who cares, who loves, who creates, and who continuously acts within his world. Most religions have a god, but only ours is a living God. In other religions, god is impersonal; ours lives. He can-

not be destroyed. Evil men tried it in the crucifixion of Jesus, but the resurrection says to us that God is alive. What does that mean to me? Simply, that he knows me, loves me, guides me, and never leaves me alone. He hears me when I call on him.

I am thankful that he is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. Our ideas of God change and grow, but God never changes. He is trustworthy, not capricious or fleeting. What he has promised he will fulfill. His forgiveness never changes. His compassion is everlasting. His love cannot be destroyed. Our changing needs find answer in a never changing God. When Abraham Lincoln was a young man, he lived for a time with a very devout, but very ignorant deacon. One night he was aroused from sleep by the deacon pounding on his door. "Wake up, Abraham, the day of judgement has come!" Lincoln jumped from bed and ran to the window. He saw a great display of stars in the heavens, shooting this way and that. It was a fearful thing to behold. But he turned and looked toward the North Star, and it was in its place. He looked for and found the other constellations. They remained. So with God. In a changing world, ours is a changeless God. How thankful that ought to make us every one.

II

I am thankful for the love of God. His love is shown in two ways. First, by his creation. "In the beginning God created . . . " The Psalmist cried, "The heavens declare the glory of God!" Everything in the world is his creation. Jesus calmly assured his hearers that God knows and feeds the birds, clothes the grass of the field, makes the sun to shine. All the discoveries of science — and science only discovers, it never creates — serve to prove the creative work of God, and point up the truth that back of all we have and know there is a great mind, a loving heart, and universal truth. God is still creating. As we look at the abundance of his creation, it ought to make us humbly grateful for so great a God. A little boy went with his father and a guide into the woods for several days. The boy was amazed at the things the guide saw and knew. One day, in his amazement at the guide's knowledge, he said, "Can you see God?" And the guide replied, "Yes, it has gotten so that I can hardly see anything else!" And that is true if we are thankful at heart.

But supremely, the love of God is shown in Jesus Christ as redeemer. Here is the heart of the New Testament message. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life!" In his teachings, Jesus talked of the love of God for his children. In his deeds, he proved that God is a compassionate, loving Father. But in his death, he demonstrated just how far the love of God would go to call back his wayward children. And when we, penitently, with faith turn to him, we discover that love is a forgiving, redeeming, saving love, extended to all men of every color, of every clime, of every condition. In a twinkling, that love can transform our lives if we let it. Thank God for his love.

III

Thank God for his fatherly goodness. Jesus taught us to call God "Father." And when he said it, he meant that we should call men "Brother." He taught us to pray, "Our Father." There can be no understanding of God that leaves out his fatherly love for his children. He loves all his children. Every human being is made in the spiritual image of God, and he is just as concerned with one child as with another. Neither the white, nor the black, nor the red, nor the rich, nor the poor, nor the American, nor the European has a monopoly on his love. He has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth! There is no chosen race, save those who choose to

do God's will! No man is better than any other man in the sight of God. He sees the heart and sees in every man possibilities for greater living and great achieving. Thank God for his fatherly goodness that shows no partiality based on superficial qualities, but loves each as though there were no others to love.

Thank God for himself. This is the fundamental attitude. All other thanksgiving grows out of it. And when our heart is in right relationship with the great heart of God, we find ways of showing our gratitude. How do you thank an earthly father who makes life full and rich and sweet for you? By being obedient to the things he has taught you, by being a loyal member of the family group, by frequently telling him of your love for him, and by serving those whom the father loves. So with our thanksgiving for God. We show our gratitude by doing what he has taught us we ought to do, by surrendering ourselves wholly and completely to his way, by telling him in prayer of our love for him, and by serving those whom the Father loves. "Thanksgiving is not an inventory, nor an audit. It is a fundamental attitude of life, based on our right relationship with a creating, loving, fatherly God.

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING from page 2

commend enthusiastically the series as one which deserves a wide circulation through church libraries. (John Knox Press, boxed set of the four new volumes, $7; single copies, $2; four or more volumes, $1.75 each)

Heart of the Christian Year by Harold Blake Walker contains daily meditations for each day from Advent through Easter. Originally published in the author's syndicated column, "Living Faith," these one-page devotional readings are written with imagination, verve, illustrative color, and a deep-flowing spiritual sensitivity. (Harper & Brothers, 152 pp., $3)

PAUL P. FRYHLING
ROBERT E. GOODRICH, JR.
HOMER J. R. ELFORD
RALPH W. SOCKMAN

THIS IS THE WAY GOD COMES

O COME, IMMANUEL

Paul P. Fryhling, First Covenant Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota

The Lord harkened and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and thought on his name . . . for you who fear my name the Sun of Righteousness shall rise with healing in his wings. Malachi 3:16; 4-6.

At a dinner party recently, one of the guests asked, "What is Advent really?" It was a valid question, because every Christian should have an intelligent understanding of the meaning of Christ's advent and thus receive the richest blessing from it.

One of the very best ways to understand Advent fully is to take your place beside the prophet Malachi standing at the close of Old Testament revelation. With the troubled history of "the Chosen People" stretching behind him for 1500 years, he peers into the dark and foreboding future. Yet in that dark, troubled future Malachi was given to see the light of hope from God, a Day Star that should arise out of Jacob. Immanuel would come to Israel. This is Advent; the darkness and despair answered by the promise of God's Light.

Great Christian music has served us well in capturing and transmitting both the authentic Biblical concept as well as the spirit of Advent as it expresses the longing of man in the darkness of despair and the promise of Immanuel coming in glorious light to save and to heal.

Charles Wesley's hymn, written in 1744, articulates the plaintive longing of the faithful remnant in any time of darkness:

Come, thou long expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us;
Let us find our rest in thee.

A twelfth century Latin hymn dramatically depicts the mournful note of those who languished in pre-Christian darkness:

O come, O come, Immanuel,
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.

The answer from God is quick and sure as with a resounding trumpet call of hope, yet softly at first with a sense of comforting balm, comes the glad refrain:

Rejoice! rejoice!
Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

Still closer to the light that was to break forth in a blazing star to wise men and heavenly glory to humble shepherds, is the clarion call of the anthem:

"Wake, awake! For night is flying!"
The watchmen on the heights are crying,
"Awake, Jerusalem, at last!"

It remains, however, for the majestic lines written by Johan Rist in 1641 and set to music by Johann Schop to give full expression to the deep meaning and high glory of Christ's birth:

Break forth, O beauteous heavenly light,
And usher in the morning;
Ye shepherds, shrink not with affright,
But hear the angels' warning.
This child, this little helpless boy,

Shall be our confidence and joy,
The powers of hell o'er-throwing,
At last our peace bestowing.

This is Advent.

On the first of four Sundays preceding Christmas, the church seeks to remind its people of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of Immanuel, the light in Israel's darkness. Next it has been careful to point out the fact of personal judgment in the very coming of Christ to be the revealer of God and the Savior, "but who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? He shall be like a refiner's fire or a fuller's soap, and he shall purify the sons of Levi." (Malachi 3:2-3).

Thirdly in Advent, the church points toward the second advent, the return of Jesus Christ to receive the faithful into his kingdom and to judge the world. Above all, the church in Advent proclaims the central truth of the gospel, the King and Savior, who, in the moments of his highest acclaim, knew that he was born to die that men might live with him.

It is within the framework of these references to the whole Word and work of God that the joyous festival of Christmas should be observed. The tinsel, the bright stars, and the chiming of silver bells are all properly in keeping with Christmas, but not without the deeper tones of personal judgment, of blood-bought redemption and of the ultimate consummation. All of this is Advent.

Advent has also a significant personal aspect. Wherever a sinner discouraged and despairing in the darkness of sinfulness and degradation looks up and finds salvation's light in Christ, there is Advent.

Whenever the Christian in times of hardship, suffering, grief, and disappointment hears the firm promise of God, "Be still my soul, the Lord is on thy side," there is Advent.

This present world is shrouded in the darkness of fear, suspicion, and the ever-present danger that all free men are threatened by godless forces. When the words of that great twelfth century hymn shall one day come true,

O come, Desire of nations,
Bind in one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace,

that will be the ultimate Advent.

Darkness and longing rise from the hearts of multitudes around the world today. Every sensitive Christian would join in the pleading words,

O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
And drive away the shades of night,
And pierce the clouds and bring us light!

It is in this spirit that Malachi is led to write the closing paragraphs of his prophetic book. He first describes the predicament of the faithful; countering that predicament is the provision of the Father; and beyond the present provision there is a sublime promise of the future.

I

The picture is one of God listening in and hearing his people wondering: "Is it vain to serve God; what profit is it to keep his ordinances and walk mournfully before the Lord of hosts? The proud seem to be blessed and the evildoers not only prosper but when they even dare God, they escape."

This is the voice of Israel's faithful remnant. How often Israel in her despair might well have prayed, "O come, Immanuel and ransom captive Israel!" For most of her checkered history, the chosen people seemed to be the poorest, the hardest pressed, the least happy. Whereas all about them the idolatrous, wicked neighboring nations seemed both successful and happy. Can we blame them for

asking now and again, "Is it vain to serve God?"

Malachi, standing at the close of the Old Testament time and peering wistfully in the future could easily reflect upon the history of his people stretching behind him for fifteen hundred years. It was not a completely pleasant story.

Israel's history began on a very high level in the bright age of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Following that it suffered four centuries of slavery in Egypt. Coming up out of that darkness under the mighty hand of God and the leadership of Moses and Joshua, Israel went through the successful period of the Judges and felt that it had reached its zenith as a nation when at last they had a king, the mighty Saul. Hope flickered out however when, on Mount Gilboa, Saul and Jonathan fell before the hosts of the Philistines. "How are the mighty fallen!"

Even the glory of the greatest king, the man after God's own heart, David, was tarnished when he thought more of Bathsheba than of God. The glory of Solomon, building the beautiful palace and the temple resplendent with gold, was still a hollow glory which resulted in civil strife and a split kingdom when his impetuous son, Rehoboam ascended the throne.

When the prophets tried unsuccessfully to keep the people faithful to Jehovah and to restrain them from worshipping Baal, God sent the thundering armies of Sennacherib to sweep away the Northern Kingdom, "the ten lost tribes" in 722 B.C. A century and a half later the armies of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar stood at the gates of Jerusalem and marched in to destroy the temple and to carry away its inhabitants to Babylon where the faithful "hung their hearts upon the willow trees." When the captives were called upon to sing some of the old temple songs, they expressed their despair and longing in the words: "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I forget thee, O Jerusalem!"

After half a century and more, a remnant did return under Ezra, Zerubbabel, and Nehemiah. They rebuilt the temple and the walls of the city. They were spiritually free but politically bound. This was the situation when Malachi lived. Still future was the time when Judas Maccabaeus would lead the little nation to win a temporary political freedom. But it was to be short lived, brought to a close when the Roman legions conquered the entire civilized world. It was into such a state that John the Baptist came to announce, "The kingdom of God is at hand!"

As though it were not enough that godless nations controlled the social and political affairs of Israel, the religious leaders of her own land, though outwardly orthodox, were unfaithful to their God. These leaders had no deep desire for Immanuel to come, for they were satisfied with the comfortable, rich and powerful place which they held in their little nation.

In our day as in that far-off time, though much different in outward form, there is a darkness within which the lives of the faithful are lived. The faithful see the apparently unequal struggle between right and wrong. It often appears that arrogance, wickedness, and deceit are the accepted order of the day and lead to success. The businessman, the professional man, the person wishing to gain stature in society are often convinced that they must "go along with the crowd" or dabble in degrading practices in order to gain success.

In the midst of this, the faithful are still choosing the hard right rather than the easy wrong. But there are often deep frustrations and wonderings: "Does it pay to serve God? Is righteousness rewarding?" To such, God is answering with light, saying: "Rejoice when you are persecuted for righteousness sake. Rejoice, for God

is with you." Blessed is the man whose "delight is in the law of the Lord."

II

A touching scene is described in verses sixteen and seventeen of Malachi three. God had been listening to the plaintive longings and the complaints of his faithful people. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another." Little groups gathered for the reading of the Word of God, for prayer, to "share their mutual woes, their mutual burdens bear."

In response to this, "the Lord hearkened and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him of them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name." Their faithfulness was not going unnoticed nor unrewarded. They were believing in hope; they were to be rewarded by eternal salvation. "The book of remembrance" quickly brings to mind the reference to "the Lamb's book of life" in the twentieth chapter of Revelation. Those whose names are written therein will be welcomed into heaven's glory.

Malachi continues God's promise, "And they shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels." Another version says, "when I take action." Here is a prophecy of a mighty transaction, the work to be wrought on Calvary. There the will of the Father would be carried out.

It was an efficacious action: provided by God, planned from the foundation of the world, promised through prophet and priest in Old Testament times (every bloody sacrifice was a prophecy of Calvary), and perfected in the blood of the Lamb, "who died for our offences and rose again for our justification."

It was an effective and clear record. Malachi's words make it plain: "Then once more you shall distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him."

What is this distinction? No clearer statement can be had than Jesus' word to Nicodemus, the intelligent ruler of the Jews, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). This is the unchangeable point of distinction. "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him." (John 3.36)

The provision of the father in answer to the trial and longing of the faithful is a salvation that gives pardon for sins and a "peace with God that passeth all understanding."

III

We have seen the message of Advent rise out of the darkness in which the longing of the faithful is expressed. That longing and darkness were answered by the rising of the "star out of Jacob." Yet to come is the dawning of full day, a promise of a glorious future. This is the thesis with which Malachi deals in the last chapter of the Old Testament. The close of the Old Testament and the concluding chapters of the New Testament are like windows opening out upon the unending glory God has promised mankind.

Advent as we know it and as we are experiencing it today is still a "star," but it is a morning star. It is correct to announce that "the night is far spent; the day is at hand," for Advent looks not only back to Bethlehem and to Calvary, but ahead to Christ's second coming.

In light of that fact there is both warning and comfort in Malachi's words, "Behold the day comes burning like an oven when all the arrogant and the evildoers shall be as stubble, and that day shall burn them up . . . leaving them neither root nor branch." Lest some should be shocked at the suddenness and totality of this judgment against unrighteousness, a quiet pause for thought would reveal that this is but the normal, logical, and right expectation. "Be sure your sins will find you out" is a fact that has

been borne out in practice again and again.

The psalmist was convinced of this abiding fact, "Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish" (Psalm 1:5, 6). Any study of history would reveal that this has been true both to individuals and to nations. The words of a great historian should be pondered well: "The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly small."

Over against the warning to the unrighteous is a great word of comfort to the faithful believers. "But unto you that fear my name shall the Son of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings. You shall go forth leaping as calves freed from the stall." Malachi's words look into our future. Despite the gathering uncertainty, despite the fact that two-thirds of the world is under Communism or paganism, despite the prospect of persecution for the faithful yet to come, the Son of Righteousness will destroy the wicked and will save the faithful.

In that glorious future which God has ordained as the final end for man's experience, the hurts of this life will be healed. The sufferings, the trials, and the hardship of following the will of God in the midst of a "crooked and perverse generation" will be forgotten, "not worthy to be compared with the glory that awaits." Life will know a new freedom, a freedom in God, which is the source of the only true freedom. "Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to thee, O Israel."

However beautiful of contemplation this is, it is not on this note that Malachi closes the Old Testament record. Perhaps it is to keep us from being too carried away sentimentally that he proceeds seriously to anchor us to two great landmarks. They will keep us steady and on course.

The first great landmark is the Law: "Remember ye the law of Moses, my servant, with the statutes and judgements." Despite the fact that through Christ we receive free grace unto pardon and regeneration, sincere obedience to the will of God remains an unchanged requirement. The demand for ethics, morality, and righteousness have not been reduced by the fact that failures and mistakes in our lives can find forgiveness through repentance and faith.

The other great landmark is the Gospel. "Behold I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great day of the Lord, and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers."

The clue to understanding this verse is the word of Jesus to his disciples, "Elijah has already come; then understood they that he spake of John the Baptist." It is only the gospel of God's grace communicated by the Holy Spirit that can turn the hearts of both fathers and children to the life of love, respect, and joy that Malachi had in mind. Only Jesus Christ, who saves and indwells as Lord, can do this.

How great is the light and the glory and the grace which comes by the Advent of Christ! In Him God has driven "the shades of night" away. Hope to the longing cry of faithful souls in the darkness of a sin-shrouded world is made real by faith. Well might it be for us and well-pleasing will it be to God that our prayer shall continually be, until Jesus comes again,

O come, thou Wisdom from on high,
And order all things far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And cause us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,

And be Thyself our King of Peace.

If our spiritual ears are sensitive, we shall hear God answering from glory.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
Shall come to thee . . .

THIS IS THE WAY GOD COMES

Robert E. Goodrich, Jr., First Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas

Jesus was born long ago. Did you ever consider the symbolism involved in the time of his birth, not the particular century but the particular hour of the day? According to the gospel stories, Jesus was born at night.

Actually, there is a great deal of meaningful symbolism to be found in the Christmas story. There was the crowded city of Bethlehem: there was no room for them in the Inn. This happens over and over again: Christ is not consciously put out of our lives or refused entrance so often as he is simply crowded out. Somebody expressed it in the lines:

O Little Inn of Bethlehem,
How like we are to you.
Our lives are crowded to the brim
With this and that to do.
We're not unfriendly to the King,
We mean well without a doubt:
We have no hostile feelings,
We merely crowd Him out.

The crowded Inn is a symbol of the crowded life.

Or there's the symbolism of the Wise Men who came seeking truth, searching for Reality. It suggests that we can be scientific about Christ: the wise men knelt before the manger which cradled not the revelation of a dream, but the revelation of a truth.

But there were also the Shepherds, men acquainted with the longings and yearnings and dreams of the human heart. And they also knelt before the manger, symbol of the fact that Jesus is the answer to the deepest longings of the human soul. We can follow our hearts to Him.

Most of us have often thought of such symbols as these. But what about the fact that Jesus was born at night? Matthew records that a "star went before them till it stood over where the young child lay." A star is only visible at night. And Luke speaks of shepherds "abiding in the fields keeping watch over their flock by night." No wonder that the world's favorite carol is "Silent Night, Holy Night."

It was night when Jesus came. In the darkness was born the hope, the light of the world. When it was dark, God came. Doesn't this very fact hold some special meaning to us? Isn't it a symbol through which we have a promise from God? After all, when the darkness descends over our life, then we need him most of all. And from the fact of Christmas we can have the faith that, if we will let him, God will come to us in the dark hours, even the dark nights of our soul.

I

Take the darkness which comes over some of us as we think of our own life, when we face the truth of what we really are in our secret selves. This is the number one problem for most of us. Someone said that he had three serious problems: "Me, myself, and I." We do have more trouble with ourselves than anybody. And it's easy to become discouraged and to feel lost.

Remember that Jesus was born at night. And Christ will come to us with the assurance that the future does not have to be a repetition of the past nor a continuation of the present. With him we can become different persons, like men born again.

Years ago a pastor nominated a certain man for an official position in the church. The man objected that he should not accept the place, but the

pastor spoke on the qualifications and duties of the officials. And later that evening this man went home with a heavy heart. "I'm simply not good enough and I'm not fit to be a steward in the church," he told his wife. His young son, overhearing the conversation, came to him and said: "Why, daddy? Why aren't you good enough ?" His son's question hit him in the heart. Yes, Why? Why wasn't he? Why shouldn't he be good enough? And that night, in the darkness of his soul, Christ was born again. And he became a different man, worthy to be an official in the church where for years now he has held an office.

This is the way God will come to us. We have a habit of thinking of New Year's Day as the date to make changes in our life and to start over again. But Christmas seems to me an even better time for we cannot really change in our own strength alone. We need help! We need a savior. And Christmas is the sign of His coming, and He was born at night. It's God's promise that in the darkness of our dissatisfaction with what we are, He will come to make us new. And we should remember that the true meaning of Christmas is not confined to a date on a calendar: it's anywhere and any time that a person will make of his heart a manger that Christ can be born again.

II

Or take another kind of darkness which most of us know: that which comes when we feel burdened by more than we can bear, when we feel inadequate to the demands of life, when it all seems more than we can handle.

I saw something the other day during the Christmas shopping rush that was for me a parable of life. It was a woman with packages in her arms piled up almost above her head. She had come out of a store to the sidewalk and in her face there was a look of desperation, as if she knew something was going to happen. And it did! First one package hit the sidewalk, then another, and another, and then all of them. Some of the sacks broke open and it looked for all the world like a variety store on the sidewalk.

That look of desperation in her face just before the packages began to fall was the perfect picture of the way so many persons feel about the burdens of their life. It's the way some of the rest of us feel about the obligations or responsibilities which confront us. We get to the breaking point We can't go on. We can't manage. Life is too much for us. And our darkness would be hopeless were it not for the fact that Jesus was born at night. God will come in our darkness if we will receive Him.

The favorite music of all the world at Christmas is Handel's "The Messiah." It came out of the darkness. It was in 1741. George Frederick Handel was walking the streets of London in bitterness and despair. He had known the plaudits of kings and queens. His music had been acclaimed. But jealous rivals had ruined him. He had been driven to bankruptcy. A stroke had left him partially paralyzed. Now he was near sixty years of age, with no income, his health shattered, his creativity gone. He felt it was the end of hope. It was a darkness such as he had never known before. And his heart echoed the cry of Jesus on the cross, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?

One night, after walking the streets, he returned to his shabby lodgings and found a bulky package on the desk. It proved to be the words of "A Sacred Oratorio" and a letter from Charles Jennens asking him to write the music. Without interest, Handel began to leaf through the pages.. A passage caught his eye: "He was despised and rejected of men." As he read further, he seemed to feel a kinship with the words: "He trusted in God . . . God did not leave his soul in hell . . . He will give you rest . . . Come unto him . . . " Now the words

began to come alive for Handel. I know that my redeemer liveth . . ." And then followed the words of the Hallelujah Chorus.

And a light was born in the darkness. Handel took his pen and began to write music. Day after day he wrote, almost as if in a trance. He would leave the table and go to the harpsichord, or walk about the room, crying, "Hallelujah," with tears running down his cheeks.. At last he fell on his bed utterly exhausted. He slept for seventeen hours, but on the desk lay the score for "The Messiah."

There were still the burdens and responsibilities of life, but now there was strength to handle them. He was still beset with illness, but never despair. He actually went blind, but his spirit was undaunted.

What happened in Handel's life? In th darkness, Christ came. It was as God promised in the fact of Christmas. And it can be so with you or me. We are but fools when we try to bear the burdens and responsibilities of life alone. He has promised that He will not leave us comfortless, He will come to us! And we can claim that promise.

III

Or let's take that darkness which is perhaps the worst that we can know, the awful night of emptiness which can come when a loved one takes leave of life and precedes us out into the Beyond! There is no darkness deeper than this.

And yet, Christmas came at night! Christ came to give a light which no darkness can put out. And we have seen it happen so many times.

It was near the Christmas season just a year ago that a friend of mine took his leave of this life. They called his son, a doctor in another state, who made the journey with his mother to the funeral parlor where he confronted the reality of what had been, until that moment, only a message. But there was the fact of it: his father was dead.

As they left the funeral home, he suggested to his mother that they ride around a few moments before joining the friends and other loved ones at home. In the car, this young physician said to his mother: "You know, I can't think that father is back there in that place. I can't think of him like that at all. Somehow, I think of him as even happy in this moment with something of a reunion going on with his own father whom he loved, and his sister and all the others. Mother, I almost feel glad for him."

What a light to shine in the darkness! And mark you, but for Christ we would have no such idea, no such comfort or assurance.

As has often been said, if we want to be sure about our loved ones who precede us into the great beyond the way is not through greater learning but deeper faith. In other words, to open our hearts so that Christ can be born anew in the darkness.

So here's one aspect of the Christmas message: Jesus was born at night. God came in the darkness. And for me this is His pledge that when it gets dark in our life, when we walk in the shadows, when we're overcome by despair, or when we're discouraged with ourselves, He will come and our own prayer of invitation should always be in the spirit of these words:

O Holy Child of Bethlehem,
Decend to us, we pray:
Cast out our sin and enter in,
Be born in us today.

THINKING IN TERMS OF ADVENT

Homer J. R. Elford, Trinity Methodist Church, Youngstown, Ohio

I

During the Advent season, when we are striving to interpret the coming into the world of the Saviour of all mankind, it is important that we see this divine event as something infinitely more than a beautiful narrative designed to put us in a benevolent mood. The coming of Jesus into the world was for the divine purpose of helping all men have the quality of abundant life which God cherishes for them because they are his children. When John undertook to write his estimate of Jesus he said, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). That was this Gospel writer's way of saying that there was a quality of life in Jesus which is inherent in every man. Our Lord supported this conviction when He likened Himself to the vine and His diciples to the branches, saying in this way that both He and we are dependant upon the same great root for our life and that the same life of God courses through each of us. Jesus gave further license for this when, in speaking of the future life, He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19). That is why on Easter Sunday we often sing, "Made like him, like Him we rise." We are voicing the belief that because we are capable of living his quality of life here and now, we may have the blessed hope of living His quality of life throughout eternity. We believe that there is something latent within human life as we possess it, which is appealed to and capable of responding to the life which Jesus lived. Thus we see in Jesus, not some isolated phenomenon, but a practical example of what our lives may become. That it is which enables us to know what our Lord meant when He said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

There is one great question which confronts us, however. We ask, "How are we to go about experiencing this abundant life which we are told is latent within us?" There are, of course, many possibilities. We can, for example, follow the path of such men as Henry David Thoreau. That New Englander writer of the middle nineteenth century came to dislike many of the things and practices of the world which often made life difficult. He disliked the rush and hurry or industrial civilization. He loathed haggling over money and winced when people inquired into his business or gossiped about affairs. So one day he did what many of us have often said we wished we might do. He built a one-room cabin on the shores of a small lake and soon took leave of his neighbors and went to live alone in his simple shack. He subsisted on a vegetarian diet provided by his own garden. Later he wrote why he had done this. He said, "I went into the woods to live deep, and to follow the kind of existence whereby I would not discover, when I came to die, that I had not really lived." We know that Thoreau was not the first, or the last, to try to discover that such a practice does not provide the solution. Some withdrawal is essential that we may gain a sense of perspective. That was why Jesus left the scene of His baptism to spend forty days in the wilderness. He also spent regular times in prayer in the mountains or in other places away from the cries of the crowd. However, Jesus taught us by precept and example that real abundant life finds its fullfillment in fellowship and service with other people. He knew what some poet would have in mind when he wrote:

The parish priest of austerity,
Climbed to a high church steeple

To be nearer God, that he might hand down
His word upon the people.
So in sermon script he daily wrote
What he thought was sent from heaven,
And dropped it down on the peoples heads
Two times each day in seven.
In his age, God said, "Come down and die."
And he cried out from his steeple:
"Where art thou Lord?" And the Lord replied:
"Down here among my people."

No, the abundant life of which Jesus was the incarnation, cannot be experienced in isolation; it can be entered into only by those who are willing to take the risk of losing themselves through active participation in it. It is a mote question as to whether all of George Bernard Shaw's writings deserve a place in the world's permanent store of great literature, but he may have atoned for some of his foolishness when he wrote: "This is the true joy of life: the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being throughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy." That is another way of saying what Jesus constantly emphasized: life abundant comes only to those who give themselves wholeheartedly to something and to someone outside themselves.

We often spend so much of our time trying to find abundant life through the pursuit of elusive goals. How we need to learn that the possibilities for this cherished ideal are within us at all times. Some forty years ago, when oil was discovered in Oklahoma, a New York newspaper sent a reporter out there to write up the story. Among other things he told of an elderly couple who had toiled for years and eeked out a scanty livelihood farming the poor soil. One day a man came along and asked for a drink of water. The farmer's wife was surprised to see him take some of the water away in a little bottle. Later the man returned and made an offer for the farm which seemed very liberal, and the farmer accepted it. A short time afterward a drilling outfit came and drove a pipe down between the house and the barn. Before long the flow of oil was the talk of the neighborhood. The reporter told of seeing the elderly couple leaning on the bars of the fence, watching the operation of the well, and the woman saying to her husband. "Dad, to think that we slaved here all those years and all this was at our doorstep and we never knew it."

Are you wondering why life doesn't seem to have any glory about it? Are you feeling that life has passed you by? Do you really want to live the abundant life? Then look to your own self and realize the infinite possibilities which are within you. And then look to Jesus and know that if you will but follow Him with all your mind and heart and soul and strength, His quality and abundant life can be yours. That is one of the great meanings to be found in the life of Him whose birth we are preparing to celebrate.

II

The Advent Season is that period immediately before Christmas when Christians seek to prepare themselves for the spiritual observance of the birth of the Savior of the world. This time has been set aside since about the fourth Century as a time for announcing Christ's continual coming into the hearts of those who "prepare Him room." During this season we emphasize in our rituals, hymns, and sermons, as well as our selection of scripture readings, the doctrine of the Incarnation—the Word made flesh and dwelling among us.

The spirit of the season is described in this paragraph from the pen of a French scholar by the name of Fernand Cabrol: "It is the near approach

of the Son of God in the flesh for which one must prepare oneself with greater watchfulness, and by the practice of works of charity; it is the voice of the prophets announcing the Messiah who comes; it is the world awaiting its Redeemer, sighing as the parched ground for the dew of heaven; it is St. Paul exhorting the faithful, awakening them from their sleep upon the vigil of the Coming of Christ; it is John the Baptist, the last of the long line of Prophets, who cries in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord!'" We know, too, that this is the time of year when we intensify our preparations for the Christmas celebration through such physical activity as the purchase and wrapping of gifts for loved ones and friends. It is a time for family and public observances designed to give new place to those intangible values which alone make life worth living. It is a time when we seek to discover the boundless joy which is reserved for those who consider the happiness of others more important than their own.

Those who are familiar with the history of the Christian religion know that there is good reason for referring to Jesus as "The Hope of the World." For many generations the people of the world had hoped for a Messiah, who would save them from their sins and also bring an end to the cruel oppression which for so long had held them captives. Isaiah had expressed this hope when he had envisioned the coming deliverer as one of whom it could be said: "And the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." From our vantage point in time we can see that the specific expectation of Isaiah, and those he represented before and after his time, did not materialize. While those whose religion is based almost entirely on Old Testament teaching continue to look for a Messiah who will come close to Isaiah's description, and while others anticipate the second coming of Christ, many of us choose to believe that it is God's intention to govern the world, not through political or military force, but by the very spiritual means of his divine influence in the lives which accept Christ as the hope of the world.

Coming as Jesus did, in the form of a little child who was born amid humble surroundings and laid in a manger bed; living His life as He lived it, in the most commonly accepted, unpretentious manner there in a carpenter's household in a small village; teaching as He taught that "the meek shall inherit the earth"; and dying as He died, with a prayer of forgiveness on His lips for those who had not caught the real significance of His message, we are led to only one conclusion as we look for an answer to the question, "Why is Jesus the hope of the world?" It is that just as God shows his greatest power in the quiet movements of the tide of the ocean, in the silent growth of a mighty oak from a small acorn, and through the miricle of human birth, so God seems to have chosen to redeem His world not by might, nor by noisy power, but in the soul of man, His greatest creation. We know that whenever and wherever men have allowed Christ to influence their hearts, to direct their thinking, and to determine their conduct, they have been led out of their darkness to the daylight of hope.

Or again, we may say that Christ is the hope of the world because in Him we find the embodiment of the fact of re-birth. We see in Jesus that which brings to life again all that has become deadened by the forces of evil which are forever trying to destroy life. Familiar as we are with what His presence and influence did for those who were privileged to experience His life-transforming power during the days of His flesh, we know, also, that He continues to work His miracles of regeneration in the lives of

those who accept Him. As Charles Wesley put it:

He speaks, and, listening to His voice,
New life the dead receive;
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice;
The humble poor believe.

No wonder this hymn writer encourages:

Hear Him, ye deaf; His praise, ye dumb,
Your loosened tongues employ;
Ye blind, behold your Savior come;
And leap, ye lame, for joy.

So, finding ourselves, as we do, caught in the maelstrom of a world which is moving and changing so rapidly that the older values are in grave danger of being spun out of reach by this centrifugal force of our time, how we need to have our eyes turned once again to this Babe of Bethlehem and realize that in Him, and in what He really represents, are met the hopes and fears of all the years. Allowing our fears to be confronted by the everlasting truth revealed to us in Christ—the truth that God is in the center of all of life—we are given that quenchless hope which is all a good man needs to lift him out of his despair and set his feet on solid ground.

In the RCA Building in Rockefeller Center in New York City there are some great murals. Underneath one is this wise reminder: "Man's ultimate destiny depends not upon his ability to learn new lessons or to make new discoveries and conquests, but upon his willingness to accept the lesson taught him close upon two thousand years ago." We believe that while we may hope each day for fresh insights as to His meaning for our lives and while we may hope for new revelations of his presence in every relationship into which life thrusts us, actually we need no other Incarnation than that made manifest long ago in the person of the Babe of Bethlehem. All that is needed now is for us to give Him room in our lives; to take Him seriously; to allow Him to use us as instruments of this one great hope of the world.

ARE YOU READY FOR CHRISTMAS?

Ralph W. Sockman, Christ Church, New York City, New York

We are all getting ready for Christmas. Festive trees are in the streets. Gifts are being wrapped and mailed.

But are we getting ourselves ready to receive what Christ came to give? Christmas not merely demonstrates the grace of giving but also the gift of grace. It commemorates the coming of Christ the Savior. And the deep, searching question is, are we ready to receive his saving grace?

When the Pilgrim Fathers, after their stormy and dangerous voyage across the Atlantic, reached Plymouth Rock, they are reported to have read aloud the sixth chapter of Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians. The chapter begins thus: "Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain." They felt immeasurably grateful to God for his grace in sparing their lives. When a person has come safely through a close brush with death, his gratitude is unbounded. Some years ago in a train wreck which injured a number of my fellow passengers and killed one, I heard a survivor standing beside me say in a prayerful tone: "Believe me, from here on I'm going to walk the straight and narrow."

We have survived two world wars which have taken the lives of millions of our fellow men. By God's grace our lot has been cast in this fair land and not in the embattled regions or the poverty-stricken regions. By the grace of God our forefathers were given the gospel of the redeeming

Christ, whose teachings insured to this North American continent the freedom of worship, of speech, and of thought. By God's grace we are alive to enjoy the blessings of a security for which others have sacrificed.

We have an ugly word for the person who receives benefits without responding. We call him an ingrate. How heartbreaking to see parents pouring their sacrifices and hopes into a son only to have him turn out an ingrate and a wastrel. How tragic if millions of Americans and Canadians, of British and French suffer wounds and death in war only to have the survivors use the liberties so painfully won for more gadgets and gas, more liquor and indulgences. How sad to think of God giving his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, for the saving of his children into eternal life only to have them waste his grace in futile and foolish living. As we approach this Christmas may we not say what Paul said to the Corinthians, "Working together with Him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain."

I

If we are to receive God's grace this Christmas, we must first of all, consecrate ourselves. Every decent person feels responsible for himself. Of course, we want to save ourselves. But what is it to save ourselves? Is it merely to escape hell and get to heaven? Jesus did not so teach. He made it clear that we save ourselves only as we seek to help and save others. Hear Jesus' words: "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Read again Jesus' description of the Last Judgment in which the test of persons was whether they had given help to the hungry, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned. Salvation, as Jesus taught, is the state of being in right relationship with God and our fellowmen.

Sometimes I receive letters asking, "Can a person be saved without joining the church?" In answering that query much depends on the motive and spirit of the questioner. If he is merely concerned about getting the rewards of heaven and escaping the punishment of hell, then his motives are fear and self-interest, and as we have said, such motives will not save a person either inside or outside the church.

Moreover, when a person outside the church asks whether it is necessary to join in order to be saved, we should know what is his reason for being outside. Is it because he cannot find a church which perfectly suits him? If that is his attitude, then he has not caught the spirit of Christ. One reason for joining the church is that it disciplines us to working with people who may differ from us in many things.

A musical authority has said that one of the things which has made Johann Bach's music so widely loved is that he composed it in the midst of household distractions. He wrote for various members of a large family circle. And he often had to write in, or within sound of, the kitchen where pots and pans were being scoured and where his numerous children were running in and out.

I cannot vouch for this appraisal of Bach, but I do believe that Christ's spirit is not in the heart of those persons who wax mystically eloquent about their love for Christ but find the people of his church too irritating to join. The New Testament makes it clear that we cannot truly say we love God whom we have not seen if we do not love his children whom we have seen.

In the church which I serve, the invitation to the table of Holy Communion is couched in these words: "Ye that do truly and earnestly repent of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbors, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways, draw near with faith, and take this Holy Sacrament to your comfort." Do not these words express the spirit

in which we are to draw near to Christmas, if, as Saint Paul said, "We are not to accept the grace of God in vain"?

II

After thus consecrating ourselves, we should go on, secondly, to consecrate ourselves to our households. Christmas turns our thoughts to our homes. Wherever possible we wish to celebrate it in the company of our loved ones.

But consecrating ourselves to our families is more than merely enjoying their fellowship. Some years ago the head of a family addressed a parent-teachers' meeting at a private school in New York City. He said he could see nothing in the modern school curriculum which took the place of his father's early training. He went on to say that it could hardly be supposed that his father as a boy got up at 5 a.m. to milk the cows and kept the family wood pile stocked because of his fondness for these occupations. Rather were they necessary functions of home life, the daily performance of which fell to his lot, as did other tasks of the other children.

This daily rendering of service vital to the well being of the family developed in him the power to make himself do the duties which presented themselves wholly apart from how he felt about them—a power which was surely the foundation of the complete self-mastery which was one of the outstanding characteristics of his life. The man who made that speech was John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and the father he was describing was John D. Rockefeller. But how are we to develop this sense of responsibility in our homes? By giving youth tasks such as John D. Rockefeller was given. Yes, that helps. But that is not enough. Jesus asserted that family loyalties are held together by higher loyalties. That, as I understand it, was the reason for Jesus' saying: "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." Christ was not setting himself up as the rival of other members of the family but as the strengthener of our family ties.

In Scotland I visited the birthplace of Bobby Burns. As you know, he was born in a simple thatched roofed cottage. His father was a humble farmer. Nevertheless, I saw a little book of devotions which Bobby's father prepared and printed for family use. After seeing that little book, I understood better Burn's poem, "The Cotter's Saturday Night," in which he pictured the cottager with a Bible on his knee, surrounded by his children to whom he was reading. And I realized afresh the truth of Burns' lines:

From scenes like this Old Scotia's
grandeur grows,
Which makes her loved at home,
revered abroad.

Take the influence of the Bible out of the home life of a nation and see how long the grace of family living lasts. It might not disappear at once. The integrity and discipline developed by God-fearing, Bible-reading parents may linger among children who have ceased to keep up religious practices. But isolate a household from religious influence for a few generations and see what happens? The glow would go out of Christmas, the comfort would go out of Easter, the graciousness would go out of hospitality, the grace would go out of family living.

Yes, on every side we are hearing the words, "Home for Christmas." We are getting ready for Christmas with loved ones. In it all, let us remember that this family festivity was inspired by a Heavenly Father who gave his only begotten Son for our redemption. Therefore, "working together with him, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain." At the Christmas table prepare a place for the Divine Guest.

III

And beyond ourselves and our households, are we getting our communities ready for Christmas? The

decorations are up. In Rockefeller Plaza a great Christmas tree stands, aglow with lights. And I can just imagine what Kansas City looks like, for some years ago I was flying through that city from the West. The pilot in friendly fashion called back through the loud speaker that he would give us a chance to see the city's Christmas decorations. We looked down on a veritable fairyland. Every city in Christendom from Anchorage to Singapore has put stars in her hair. Christmas is the time when our communities show a spirit of good will unmatched at other times.

Ah, that last phrase casts a shadow, doesn't it? A good will "unmatched at other times." The Christmas trees set up in our homes and streets will soon find their way to the rubbish heap. But can we not consecrate ourselves to keep the Christmas spirit of good will from going into the garbage? As John Oxenham sings in his hymn:

In Christ there is no East or West,
In him there is no South or North,
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.
In him shall true hearts everywhere,
Their high communion find;
His service is the golden cord
Close binding all mankind.

God sent Christ to redeem us all, regardless of race or color. Let us not receive His grace in vain, but working together with him may we rise above the barriers which keep us from being brothers in Christ.

Remember the occasion when the disciple Thomas doubted the reality of the risen Christ. The gospel record is, "The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, 'Peace be with you.'"

So he still comes. Therefore, "as working together with him, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain."

WORTH QUOTING from page 2

have rushed through life trying to save.

—Will Rogers

* * *

One of the fundamental principles of our Christian faith is that we do not walk alone. We have not been sent out as solitary sentinels. There is always One other with us!

This is the faith that has sustained lonely missionaries in dark and dreadful places. This is the faith that has held heroes to their tasks . . . The righteous do not walk alone.

As a matter of fact, that "other one" always goes ahead and prepares the way. No man has ever been called by God to work in any field that was strange to God. He never calls any of us to assume a task he has not sized up before he assigns. And at the moment he makes the assignment he kows all the reasons why we cannot do it, but he also knows how he can help, and thus wrest victory out of defeat.

—Roy L. Smith

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"Yesterday I got lost in a supermarket," confesses Bill Norman, "and it shames me to remember that my great-grandfather found his way across the continent in a trackless wilderness."

—Burton Hillis

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What is it about human nature that makes it easier to break a commandment than a habit?

—Burton Hillis

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"God prefers a whole heart," our pastor gently told us Sunday, "but He will accept a broken one."

—Burton Hillis

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True prayer is a visit into the heavenly world. We step across the

boundary between the seen and the unseen, the temporal and eternal, the material and spiritual. And as with the Lord, so with us: "As he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered." We cannot breathe the atmosphere of heaven and look upon our Father's radiant countenance and be unaffected.

—Max I. Reich

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The disciple must outgrow the need for his teacher. Perpetual discipleship is never good. No matter how great the teacher, if the disciples must lean upon him always he has not done a proper job of teaching. One of the most useful tasks of a good teacher is to make himself unnecessary.

—A. W. Tozer

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A Christian must not become a Communist because he is bound to preserve the dignity and the liberty of man . . . When God asks a man, "Lovest thou me?", the Communist must answer: "I have no will and no love of my own. It is society which is the perfect thing I serve, and you must ask that question of society." The man who cannot answer God for himself has lost his liberty.

—Martin Niemoller

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Those who know the truth are not equal to those who love it.

—Confucius

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A new science of human behavior is emerging. Science arose to solve real needs. When men wanted to measure land, they developed geometry. The need now is to understand man, his relations to others, to his world. We have a new set of problems — aging, delinquency, war and peace — and now a new interdisciplinary task force is arising to meet them.

—Ralph W. Gerard

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The question, "What shall we do with the wicked?", is really the wrong question, since we are all sinners, in varying degrees. Some people want to exterminate sin by getting rid of the people who "have it." But that is not God's way. We misunderstand God, too, if we think that we have to be made comfortable by his blessings. Whoever said the blessings of God must always stroke our fur the right way? Our business is not to be comfortable, but to get busy with God's work. It is foolish to assume that there is plenty of time to do good.

—Allen G. Wehrli

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Jesus took bread — not the sword, nor angels, nor power — but bread, by which, through the Holy Communion, he has been able to conquer as those who have taken the sword could not.

—Arthur M. Krueger

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Man is playing with cosmic forces, and whether he is going to turn them to good or into weapons depends on what this generation is being taught.

—Paul Calvin Payne

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If in the average church we should suddenly take seriously the notion that every lay member, man or woman, is really a minister of Christ, we could have something like a revolution in a very short time.

—D. Elton Trueblood

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Duty is what the average man looks forward to with distaste, does with reluctance, and boasts about forever after.

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Love of man means service to man. Love of God means obedience to the heavenly vision. And when individuals are fully committed to lives of love, lived in obedience to God and in service to one's fellow men, changes are inevitable.

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When small men cast big shadows the sun is nearly set.

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Not the good that we do, not the

good that we have, but the good that we are, is the secret of following Jesus.

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Leslie Weatherhead tells of a girl, who having attended many conferences, uttered something very true when she said: "I have a hundred ideas. What I want now is the courage to put a single one of them into operation in my life."

* * *

The only efficacy there is to knowledge about a better life is the practice of it. A wire may be dead or alive, but it makes a great deal of difference whether it is or not. An architect through his abilities of imagination and proportion may have visions of a hundred different homes. The validity of any one of his plans, however, awaits the actual construction of it. To know the better is not enough. It will take God to get you to do the better and to live the better. We rely upon a divine power that in response to our faith is able to impel us to make the effort and to make it successfully. It will take God.

—Hazen G. Werner

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The aim of education should be changed from a high standard of living to a high standard of doing.

—Abraham J. Herschel

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The preacher's business is not merely to discuss repentance, but to persuade people to repent; not merely to debate the meaning and possibility of Christian faith, but to produce Christian faith in the lives of his listeners; not merely to talk about the available power of God to bring victory over trouble and temptation, but to send people out from their worship on Sunday with victory in their possession.

A good sermon is an engineering operation by which a chasm is bridged so that spiritual goods on one side — the "unsearchable riches of Christ" — are actually transported into personal lives upon the other.

Here lies the difference between a sermon and a lecture. A lecture is chiefly concerned with a subject to be elucidated; a sermon is chiefly concerned with an object to be achieved. A justifiable criticism of much modern, liberal preaching is that, though it consists of neat, analytical discourses, pertinent to real problems, and often well conceived and happily phrased, it does nothing to anyone. Such sermons are not sermons, but essays, treatises, lectures. It is lamentably easy to preach about moral courage without making anyone more courageous; to deliver a discourse on faith without creating any of that valuable article in a single life; to argue that man has power to decide and choose, without causing anyone then and there to make a momentous decision.

—Harry Emerson Fosdick

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Some minds are like concrete — all mixed up and permanently set.

—Burton Hillis

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Bread for myself is a physical problem, but bread for my neighbor is a spiritual problem.

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There is no place in Christian social action for the tempting axiom, "the end justifies the means." Both our goals and our methods must constantly be checked against the Biblical principles of love and justice.

—Samuel H. Moffett

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A certain old church engaged an artist to brighten up and repair the lovely artwork which had become a little faded with the years. He completed the job and sent in a bill for $87.30—which the good folks thought was a bit steep, so they asked him to itemize it and he did.

On the complete list were items like these: "For correcting the Ten Commandments, $5.12; for renewing heaven, touching up the angels' wings, and adjusting the stars, $7.14; for touching up Purgatory and restoring

lost souls, $3.06; for brightening up the flames of Hell and doing odd jobs for the damned, $7.17."

This was the cost to them of making their religion contemporary. They paid a price to keep a religious symbol up to date.

Times have not changed, for we too pay a price to keep our religious faith contemporary. Yesterday's faith will not support us today. The faith of our parents, the church of our childhood—these will not support us today.

We spend little on church symbols, but the time and talents of hundreds of church members are dedicated to making Christ contemporary.

How this age needs the contemporary Christ! He is up to date! We have a gospel that transforms and changes human lives. From defeat to strength, from fear to peace with God and therefore peace with ourselves. We have a Christ who lifts troubled minds out of the hell of their torment to the peace of His Kingdom.

This is our calling, this is our task. Our gifts do not restore old paintings, but transform the living. Perhaps as the old painter put it, "We do odd jobs for the damned." Isn't it a worthy calling? Isn't it a satisfying task?

Roy D. Brokenshire

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The decision of the generation in which we live today is whether we will follow the risen Christ, or will the world decline and decay under the chilling influences of materialistic, godless communism. Nothing less than a return to sacrificial and dedicated Christianity will stem the tide.

George W. Goddard

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In his Bible opposite the verse which reads, "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord," George Muller wrote, "And the stops, too."

* * *

People need to be reminded more often than they need to be instructed.

Samuel Johnson

That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; that man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest influence, both personal and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others.

John Ruskin

* * *

A small girl was lost in a rugged forest that stretched out for miles. For three days, a band of men searched for her without success. On the fourth day she was found cold and hungry, but unharmed, by a man who had not started to search until the fourth day. "At first I thought there were enough men in the search party, but then I decided that maybe one other man looking for her might find her," he said afterward. Here is a conclusive answer to the question we sometimes ask, "But what can I do?" We may feel that there is not much any one of us could do . . . but God works through us, and our effort may be just what is needed to advance his cause. We can do something, if we believe in God's power and grace.

Hugh Malcolm

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There can be conflict between science and religion. Science is a reliable method of finding truth. Religion is the search for a satisfying way of life. Science is growing — yet a world that has science needs, as never before, the inspiration that religion has to offer.

Arthur H. Compton

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Every question answered exposes a hundred mysteries to be investigated.

Milton Eisenhower

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Our great need is to plumb the ignorance of the educated and the anti-intellectualism of the intellectual.

Jacques Barzum

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An educated man stores in his mind surpluses of information, plans of re-

form, criticisms of actions already taken, before the need for them arises. Your camel's hump of wisdom attained in the university cannot possibly last for the journey from commencement to the grave. Many a Sahara will need to be crossed before that day comes. A solid diet of mastered study in five-year blocks will keep your hump of wisdom ready for many an anforeseen journey.

Louis Wm. Norris

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John Macmurray defines faith as, "What you propose to do in the presence of your ignorance."

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It is better to be wrong than asleep.

John S. Nuveen

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Plutarch said: "Good things are hard." He was right. It is hard to think of others when all the instincts of self-preservation are urging us to think only of ourselves; it is hard to be tolerant and sympathetic toward another's point of view when our beliefs are challenged. It is so easy to condemn others, and so hard to criticize and correct our own shortcomings. Yes, good things are hard but striving for them is the only known way to build character — one of life's most priceless assets.

Dale Carnegie

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A wise man long ago said, "To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under the heavens, a time to weep, a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance," but he did not say there is a time to be reasonable and a time to be unreasonable. For were that the case, one would not know when to weep and when to laugh.

Paul King Jewett